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MID-LEVEL SERVICE DOCTRINE: IS THERE A NEED?

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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ABSTRACT

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MID-LEVEL SERVICE DOCTRINE: IS THERE A NEED?

Since the implementation of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, a growing body of joint doctrine has guided U.S. military actions. However, a corresponding reduction in service doctrine has not occurred. This has fostered doctrinal conflict and inefficiencies in the doctrine process, which affect the entirety of the American military organization.

By examining the arguments of those who favor the ultimate supremacy of joint doctrine at the theater-strategic and operational levels of war, as well as the counter-arguments of the proponents of retaining strong service doctrine at those same levels, a case is made for replacing service doctrine with joint doctrine and improving aspects of the current joint doctrine development process.

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THESIS

Considering today's world of joint operations and joint doctrine, and factoring in the authoritative nature and relative precedence of joint doctrine, the need for service-specific doctrine at the theater-strategic and operational levels of war must be reconsidered.

INTRODUCTION

Since the implementation of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, a growing body of joint doctrine has augmented an already substantial amount of service doctrine in an attempt to define the framework of U.S. military actions. Before Goldwater-Nichols, service doctrine reigned supreme. Has it now reached the end of its useful life? Conversely, one could ask, Is there is a proper place for service doctrine in this new joint world? The author will attempt to categorize the points of view and address arguments for and against retaining service doctrine.

In attempting to define and analyze the salient issues, the author found no body of published work addressing this "joint versus service doctrine" issue. Thus, much of the research for this paper consisted of interviews, correspondence, and conversations with subject matter experts.

The scope of this paper is limited to a discussion of joint and service doctrine at the theater-strategic and operational levels of war. National-strategic doctrine is not addressed because of its very nature: at the national level, strategic doctrine concerns itself with the military as a whole, and is thus already inherently joint. Service distinctions are not made at national-strategic level, and do not become evident until one approaches the theater-strategic level of war.

Likewise, tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) are not addressed within this paper. Although some may argue that TTP are a tactical level of doctrine¹, according to the Joint Pub 1-02 definition of *doctrine*, TTP should not be considered doctrinal in nature because they support tactical vice national level objectives.

In this discussion of service-vice-joint doctrine, the same reasoning, arguments and justifications appear to hold true for the theater-strategic and operational levels of war and doctrine. For this reason the author has grouped together the theater-strategic and operational levels under the designation: *mid-level*.

Doctrine--Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application.

Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Joint Pub 1-02 as amended through 12 January 1998), 23 March 1994

WHAT IS DOCTRINE?

To begin any discussion of doctrine, it is incumbent upon all parties to agree on the meaning of the word. The author views the *Joint Pub 1-02* definition as authoritative.

The function of military doctrine is much wider and certainly less restrictive than rules and regulations. Doctrine is not designed to encourage a universal and mindless lockstep. Instead, "Doctrine provides a military organization with a common philosophy, a common language, a common purpose, and a unity of effort."²

CLASSIFICATIONS OF DOCTRINE

Doctrine can be classified as service, multi-service, joint, or combined. *Service* doctrine is the definition of *doctrine* as applied to the military forces or elements of a single service.

The definitions of *joint* and *multi-service* doctrine are almost identical. They both are "fundamental principles that guide the employment of forces of two or

more services in coordinated action toward a common objective."³ The differences are in their approval and distribution authorities. Joint doctrine is signed and promulgated by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS).⁴ Multi-service doctrine is ratified and disseminated by two or more services.⁵ A good example of multi-service doctrine is the development by the Army and Air Force of "air-land battle" in 1972, and the 1986 refinement of "AirLand Battle" doctrine.⁶

As there are neither explicit nor implicit restrictions, the above definitions imply that joint, multi-service, and service doctrine exist throughout the spectrum of mid-level military operations.

THE ARGUMENTS FOR JOINT DOCTRINE

By examining the historical context of joint doctrine development, or by analyzing the uses of doctrine, one can develop arguments favoring the preeminence of joint doctrine. However, the strongest argument for the supremacy of joint doctrine over service doctrine is based in law and is statutory in nature.

THE STATUTORY ARGUMENT:

This argument is summarized as follows: Given that, when utilized, U.S. military forces will be employed in a joint context, and given that joint doctrine is authoritative and takes precedence over service doctrine, it follows that joint doctrine, not service doctrine, should guide our actions.

When utilized, U.S. military forces will be employed in a joint context. Title 10, chapter six, establishes the legal basis for the unified commanders. It dictates that they are joint commanders with joint forces.⁷ Their duty is to "perform military missions,"⁸ and the clear implication is that these missions, executed by a joint commander, using his joint force, are joint missions. CJCS turns this implication into a clear statement of policy when he writes, "Although the services organize, train, equip, and sustain forces, these forces are employed under joint force commanders."⁹ This policy clearly voices the legal requirement that, for U.S. forces, all military actions are now considered joint.

Title 10 does specify two legal exceptions to this CJCS policy. The first exception is that "forces assigned to carry out the functions of the Secretary of a military department"¹⁰ are not assigned to a unified commander. These forces, however, by definition, are not combat forces.¹¹ The second exception is "forces assigned to multinational peacekeeping organizations."¹² In case of peacekeeping forces, commanders would synthesize situation-specific combined doctrine reflecting the exigencies of a particular peacekeeping situation. This peacekeeping doctrine would be based on the existing doctrine of all the participating forces. For U.S. forces, current peacekeeping doctrine is joint.¹³

Joint doctrine is authoritative and takes precedence over service doctrine. In the preface to most joint publications is the following statement: "The guidance in this publication is authoritative; as such, this doctrine will be followed except when, in

the judgment of the commander, exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise. If conflicts arise between the contents of this publication and the contents of service publications, this publication will take precedence for the activities of joint forces unless the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff...has provided more current and specific guidance."¹⁴ Since, as stated above, by law all military actions are carried out by joint forces, joint doctrine prevails.

Joint doctrine, not service doctrine, should guide our actions. Joint doctrine specifically applies to joint force commanders as well as the forces under them. It applies to "the commanders of combatant commands, subunified commands, joint task forces, and subordinate components of these commands."¹⁵ It also applies specifically to "the service forces of these commands."¹⁶

To those who argue that service forces may somehow be employed outside the joint environment, CJCS policy clearly states that joint doctrine applies to all military leaders (and by extension, all forces), no matter how they are utilized. "To help achieve our fullest combat potential, *all American military leaders* must integrate the concepts and values presented...into the operations of the Armed Forces of the United States" [emphasis added].¹⁷

Does this reflect reality?

There are those within the military community who argue that the above CJCS statement does not reflect the current reality of military operations. They assert that mid-level service doctrine is not only necessary for, but also vital to, the conduct of military operations.

For example, the Navy conducts deep-water undersea warfare. This is understandably the province of the Navy, and there are no other services interested in taking part in this facet of modern warfare. The Navy has a well-developed body of guidance, philosophy, and principles applicable to this type of warfare. If deep-water undersea warfare is an example of the mid-level of war (i.e., keeping the sea lines of communications and sea lines of operations open), then this body of Naval literature is mid-level service doctrine and the necessity of its existence outside the world of joint doctrine is evident.

However, upon closer examination of this example, one finds the need for this service doctrine exists only temporarily, until appropriate joint doctrine can be developed. If this joint warfare area is truly the realm of the Navy, there should be no objections by other services to the quick work of converting such Navy doctrine into joint doctrine. Why then is there no joint pub called *Joint Doctrine for Deep Water Undersea Warfare*?

The reason this particular joint pub does not exist is the same reason the above argument is spurious. The nature of deep-water undersea warfare is not operational, but tactical (i.e., one submarine hunting another). The above mentioned extant body of Naval literature is TTP, not doctrine. Mid-level joint doctrine, however, still provides the overarching framework for this type of military operation.

Too Simplistic?

Another rebuttal of the statutory argument is that it is too simplistic. Since one of the traditional purposes of service doctrine has been to identify the "personality" of each service, the differing character of each service necessitates individual doctrines. Even CJCS seems to agree when he notes that, "...service 'cultures,' heroes, and professional standards are indispensable."¹⁸

However, differing service cultures can assuredly be divisive. As for heroes and professional standards, are they truly limited to any one service as the CJCS statement suggests? Eddie Rickenbacker's heroic status is universal, certainly not confined to the domain of the Air Force. Members of the Army and Air Force hold a sailor, John Paul Jones, in the highest regard despite of his lack of membership in the communities of foot soldiers and fliers. Unquestionably, heroism and professionalism are joint values and are not limited to the domain of any one service.

Eliminate Service Doctrine?

Does the statutory argument for the supremacy of joint doctrine dictate the elimination of mid-level service doctrine? The author argues this is true. Joint military operations are law and their basis in U.S. Code indisputable. Whether members of the military agree or disagree with CJCS, they are bound to obey the law of the land. The allegation by proponents of service doctrine that future U.S. military operations may not truly be joint is immaterial. The law exists and civil disobedience is not appropriate military behavior.

THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Another argument supporting joint vice service doctrine is based upon the historical perspective of doctrine development. At the time the Goldwater-Nichols Act went into effect there was no official joint doctrine, although doctrine did exist which had been coordinated between services. Few truly multi-service doctrine publications existed. Service doctrine, out of necessity, was the seed for the initial development of joint doctrine. Joint doctrine was appropriated from best-developed service doctrine. The lead agent and primary review authority would then insert the required iterations of the word *joint* within the text and conduct an appropriate level of coordination with other services. After approval by unified commanders and service chiefs the new joint doctrine was promulgated.

What was the result of this? Pro-service proponents believe joint doctrine to be ineffective because it either implies forced acceptance of doctrine or else panders to the lowest common denominator.

Forced Acceptance

Proponents of service parochialism assert that services wish to be the lead agent for specific doctrine development issues so that the final document will retain much of that service's flavor.¹⁹ Another way of looking at this is that one service has taken its own doctrine and forced the other services to accept it, relabeled, as joint doctrine. This view of a service attempting to inflict its will upon the other services can continue long after approval of joint doctrine. For example, the Navy has not been fully satisfied with the Air Tasking Order (ATO) concept as described in Joint Pub 3-56.1, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*. The Navy point of view is that the ATO process lacks the necessary flexibility and requires constant work-arounds to make it an effective tool for coordinating the rapid turnarounds required of Naval air assets.²⁰ Advocates of this point of view argue that service doctrine is necessary to provide an alternative philosophical position.

Lowest Common Denominator

On the other hand, some assert that joint doctrine is so watered-down by inter-service compromises, as well as the practice of removing portions of draft pubs

to which any service raises strong objections, that it panders to the lowest-common denominator. The result of this is "imprecise, confusing, or contradictory concepts. Internal inconsistencies are . . . common."²¹ Proponents of this position believe service doctrine is needed to fill in the holes left by the generic and inconsistent nature of joint doctrine.

While these arguments may have held true for the initial joint doctrine effort, joint doctrine development is now maturing into a second generation. A significant body of joint doctrine already exists in published form. One hundred and nine joint publications have been approved or approved for development.²² A system of regular periodic review and revision is in place. The Joint Warfighting Center (JWFC) is now an important and integral element of the joint doctrine development process. As the U.S. military enters this new era of jointness, they have begun the shift to true joint development of doctrine (vice service development of joint doctrine). The joint doctrine process has matured significantly beyond the simple addition of the word "joint" to single-service doctrine.

Tweak the system:

Can the system be improved? The author suggests the following adjustment to improve timeliness and performance.

Joint doctrine is written to assist joint operations, with combatant commanders conducting these joint operations. It follows that joint organizations, such as JWFC, vice the services, should be designated lead agents for joint doctrine development.

Not only should services lose their status as lead agents, but service chiefs should lose their ability to veto proposed joint doctrine. Presently, at the semi-annual Joint Doctrine Working Party (JDWP), resolution of issues requires unanimous consent of not only the nine unified commanders, but also the service chiefs. Service chiefs should be eliminated as voting members of the JDWP. Unified commanders are the warfighting commanders most directly affected by joint doctrine; thus, they should formulate doctrinal recommendations to CJCS. Although service chiefs should provide input to the development of joint doctrine, they should not wield their current authority over what specific joint doctrine is developed.

The service chiefs should approve the input of their respective services during the development of each joint publication. They should not be able to exercise veto authority over publication development, but should work together to generate a consensus to present to the unified commanders, who should then use service input to help develop their recommendation to CJCS. Some may argue that this reduction in the service chiefs' "power" over doctrine leaves them helpless in the face of forceful unified commanders. However, service chiefs, in their role as the

Joint Chiefs of Staff, will retain an extremely strong ability to influence the Chairman.

USE OF DOCTRINE

The final argument supporting the supremacy of joint doctrine addresses the actual use of joint doctrine. With respect to the services, the official purpose of joint doctrine is to "Guide the joint employment of joint forces. . . . [and to] provide a basis for joint training."²³ However, in addition to the above purposes, joint doctrine also provides a common language not found in service doctrine. By its nature, it guides the services in their primary duty, joint warfighting. It promotes efficiency in standardization and training. In spite of the services' responsibilities for training their forces, joint doctrine, by its very nature, has a strong impact on service training. Some may argue that as a greater body of joint doctrine comes into being, it infringes more and more on the Title 10 responsibilities of the services to train and equip their forces. In response to that, one must ask, To what end are the services trained and equipped? They are equipped and trained to complete joint mission-essential tasks from the Joint Mission-Essential Task List (JMETL) promulgated by CJCS and filtered through the respective combatant commanders.

So although service training is the responsibility of each respective service,²⁴ it must be focused on joint tasks. This being so, service training becomes, ipso facto, joint training and therefore is affected and influenced by joint doctrine. It follows

that CJCS, who has legal authority only over joint training, has quite a significant impact on the all training the services undertake. CJCS, through the JMETL and joint doctrine, provides the indispensable unity of focus and effort for all military training.

THE ARGUMENT FOR SERVICE DOCTRINE

THE SLOW HIPPOPOTAMUS

An argument proffered by the proponents of service doctrine is that joint doctrine development simply takes too long. Joint publications exist which have taken 10 years to develop.²⁵ The joint doctrine development process depends too much on the personalities of the service chiefs. A stubborn service chief can slow the process to an interminable crawl. Whether one is of the opinion that a particular service position is needlessly delaying an issue is usually a matter of whether one is a member of that service.²⁶

Supporters of this argument make the point that service doctrine has a significantly shorter gestation than joint doctrine. They argue that one can obtain a workable solution through service channels more expeditiously than through the joint process. Once service doctrine has been developed, it may serve as a credible position from which to push for changes in joint doctrine. A service may be able to come to the joint doctrine development process with a more refined position,

already having had some time to conduct experimentation to see what really works and what does not.

The author acknowledges in many cases service doctrine can be approved more quickly than joint doctrine. As stated in the discussion of the historical argument, one must remember that the joint process is improving as joint doctrine matures. However, the most important rebuttal is that speed does not necessarily beget quality. If the doctrinal issue involved is truly joint, the development of service doctrine may only serve to further entrench parochial, and possibly doctrinally flawed, positions, making subsequent compromise or consensus even more difficult. In this case, the service argument decrying the hippopotamic nature of the joint doctrine process is reduced to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

CONCLUSIONS

In an ideal joint military organization, mid-level doctrine would be provided by joint publications. Service publications would serve to provide TTP in support of joint doctrine. While acknowledging that the U.S. military has not yet reached this nirvana of jointness, the author is convinced it is a desired endstate worthy of significant effort.

The first step in the process toward a totally joint doctrine-based military is to carefully reexamine and revise current joint doctrine publications to ensure consistency is maintained within the body of mid-level joint doctrine. To a certain extent this process is already institutionalized in the assessment and revision phase of joint doctrine development.²⁷

After concord is established within the body of joint doctrine, mid-level service doctrine should be scrubbed for consistency with joint doctrine. Elements of service doctrine in conflict with joint doctrine should be removed. Service doctrine which simply restates joint doctrine or is already incorporated in an existing joint publication should be purged. Although these actions would eliminate a significant portion of existing service doctrine, they would also significantly reduce conflict and increase the efficiency of both joint and service doctrine. Any surviving mid-level

service doctrine would serve to amplify joint doctrine or fill in gaps until appropriate joint doctrine was developed or refined.

Doctrine development should be a truly joint process at all stages. Integration of the JWFC into the process is a step in the right direction. The services should be removed from the list of approved lead agents. Initial development of joint doctrine should be exclusively by joint organizations, such as JWFC. Service input to the process should be at this initial level, assisting the joint lead agent with working out details of the doctrine. Service chiefs should weigh in early with their service positions and work together to develop a true joint position. Once that has been realized, the service chiefs should be removed from the formal approval process and should not be voting members of the JDWP. The combatant commanders and CJCS should decide if the submitted draft joint doctrine fills their respective and collective needs. If it does, they should approve it. If it does not, they should return it to the originating organization with specific recommendations to ensure the final product is appropriate.

Finally, CJCS should emphasize more strongly the legal basis and authoritative nature of joint doctrine. Language to this effect should be developed and written into service and joint pubs using *identical* wording. There must be no question or confusion that at the theater-strategic and operational levels of war, a warfighter's actions should be guided by joint, vice service, doctrine.

NOTES

¹ Wayne P. Hughes, "The Power In Doctrine." Naval War College Review, Summer 1995, 17.

² General George H. Decker, USA, quoted in Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States, (Joint Pub 1) (Washington, DC: 10 January 1995), I-3.

³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms. (Joint Pub 1-02 As Amended through 12 January, 1998) (Washington, DC: 23 March 1994), 290, 232.

⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 1-02, 232.

⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 1-02, 290.

⁶ James J. Tritten, "Naval Perspectives for Military Doctrine Development," September 1994, Joint Electronic Library CD-ROM, Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 1998.

⁷ General Military Law, U.S. Code, Title 10— Armed Forces, secs. 161,162 (1994)

⁸ General Military Law, U.S. Code, Title 10— Armed Forces, sec. 161 (1994)

⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 1, i.

¹⁰ General Military Law, U.S. Code, Title 10— Armed Forces, sec. 162 (1994)

¹¹ General Military Law, U.S. Code, Title 10— Armed Forces, sec. 3013, 5013, 8013 (1994)

¹² General Military Law, U.S. Code, Title 10— Armed Forces, sec. 162 (1994)

¹³ Current U.S. military peacekeeping doctrine is found in: Joint Warfighting Center, Joint Task Force Commander's Handbook for Peace Operations (Fort Monroe, VA: 16 June 1997).

¹⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations (Joint Pub 5-0) (Washington, DC: 13 April 1995), i.

¹⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations (Joint Pub 3-0) (Washington, DC: 1 February 1995), i.

¹⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF) (Joint Pub 0-2) (Washington, DC: 25 February 1995), i.

¹⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 1, i.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Captain Robert Nesslerode, USN, Director, Doctrine Department, Naval Warfare Development Command, personal interview with author, 07 May 1999.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr., and Thomas-Durell Young, "Joint Doctrine Development: Overcoming a Legacy," Joint Force Quarterly, Winter 1996-1997, 95.

²² CDR David Benz, USCINACOM Joint Warfighting Center Doctrine Division, telephone conversation with author, 6 May 1999.

²³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication System, Joint Doctrine And Joint Tactics, Techniques, And Procedures Development Program (Joint Pub 1-01, Change 1) (Washington, DC: 14 September 1993), I-1.

²⁴ General Military Law, U.S. Code, Title 10 – Armed Forces, sec. 3013, 5013, 8013 (1994)

²⁵ CDR David Benz, United States Atlantic Command, Joint Warfighting Center Doctrine Division, telephone conversation with author, 6 May 1999.

²⁶ There are, of course, exceptions to this. For example, the issue of whether to develop a separate space doctrine is hotly contested, not only by the various services, but also within the Air Force itself.

²⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication System, Joint Doctrine And Joint Tactics, Techniques, And Procedures Development Program (Joint Pub 1-01, change 1) (Washington, DC: 14 September 1993), III-1 – III-15.

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